

**Steps to a Healthier US Workforce  
October 26-28, 2004**

**Session B-5  
Wednesday, October 27, 3:30 – 5:00 pm**

**Unintentional Injury with Focus on Motor Vehicles**

Session Organizers: Lee Husting, Stephanie Pratt, Ted Hitchcock (NIOSH); Chuck Hurley (National Safety Council)

Moderator: Ted Hitchcock

Recorder: Jane Roemer

**Background:**

- Unintentional injury is the leading cause of death in the U.S. for persons under age 34.
- The annual direct cost of injury is more than \$224 billion (direct medical costs, rehabilitation, lost wages, lost productivity), a 42% increase in the last decade.
- Occupational motor vehicle crashes are an important cause of injuries and fatalities.
- The roadway is also a workplace.

**Objectives:**

- To demonstrate the importance of motor vehicle crashes as a major cause of unintentional injuries and fatalities to workers and the public.
- To understand opportunities for preventing and reducing work-related motor vehicle crashes through work-based policies and innovative programs.

**Ted Hitchcock, NIOSH:**

**Key Points/Opportunities:**

- NIOSH has a Motor Vehicle Research Program that includes four new research projects.
- NIOSH is bringing a public health perspective to occupational road safety.
- A number of federal agencies are interested in workplace driving.

**Kathy Lusby-Treber**

**Director, Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS), Vienna, VA**

***Making the Business Case for Workplace Traffic Safety Programs***

**Key Points:**

- Work-related traffic crashes are a public health epidemic, and employers have a role to play.
- NETS is launching a campaign to educate businesses that traffic crashes are a significant problem
- Employers are affected by both off-the-job and on-the-job crashes as well as crashes involving employees' families.

#### Opportunities and Challenges:

- Employers are receptive to Work-Life Programs: potential benefits of minimizing workplace risks include lower operating costs, better employee relations, higher employee morale, and enhanced corporate image.
- Employers are motivated to address traffic safety to save lives and reduce injuries, protect human and financial resources, and protect against catastrophic losses.
- NETS has a 10-step program that includes management commitment, training and supervision, maintenance of company cars, and communication.
- Workplace driving safety programs can make a difference.

**Michael Belzer, Ph.D.**

**Wayne State University and President, Sound Science, Inc., Ann Arbor, MI**

#### *Illness and Injury—The Focus on Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers*

##### Key Points:

- There are 1.9 million commercial truck drivers in this country; the rate of fatalities for truck drivers is 4.5 times the rate for all workers.
- We don't look closely enough at driver health.
- Acute injuries are obvious; cumulative injury and illness are harder to spot.
- Long delay between exposure and illness; not always easy to link the illness to work behavior.
- Illness factors raise a risk to public safety as well as a health risk to drivers: public safety and the health of the commercial driver are interactive.
- Injury rates and illness rates of commercial drivers are linked.

#### Opportunities and Challenges:

- Cooperative research is needed to understand the problem and develop solutions.
- More likely to gain acceptance of research results when you engage the industry.
- Research-to-practice encourages access to data, cooperative development of solutions, and mutually acceptable solutions.
- Challenge: Trucking industry should "regulate" itself so government doesn't have to.
- Develop a culture of continuous improvement.

- Challenge: For trucking industry to use benchmarking to measure each carrier's safety and health performance against others'.
- Challenge: Harness the power of the market to link efficiency to safety; accurate ratings will shift the cost of unsafe operation to the carriers that create the problem.

**Ann M. Dellinger, Ph.D., M.P.H.**

**Acting Director, Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention, and Team Leader,  
Motor Vehicle Injury Prevention Team, CDC, Atlanta, GA**

***Motor Vehicle Injury Prevention***

Key Points:

- Motor vehicle injury is a public health problem; it is the cause of 31% of all injury deaths.
- Motor vehicles are the leading killer of children, adolescents and young adults.
- Children are at the mercy of adult drivers; nearly 2/3 of children under age 15 who die in motor vehicle crashes are riding with a drinking driver.
- Young drivers have more crashes.

Opportunities and Challenges:

- Key intervention strategies include increasing seat belt/child safety seat use, reducing drunk driving, reducing speed, increasing pedestrian safety, wearing bicycle and motorcycle helmets, improving EMS, strengthening teen driver licensing requirements, and increasing enforcement.
- CDC's Challenge: Conduct research using public health model, focus on vulnerable road users and underserved populations, and document cost and public health burden of motor vehicle injuries.

**Charles A. Hurley**

**Vice President, Transportation Safety Group  
National Safety Council, Washington, DC**

***Unintentional Injury with Focus on Motor Vehicles***

Key Points:

- Motor vehicle risk has been left out of the classic field of occupational safety and health.
- There is a fundamental need for accurate motor vehicle fatality data.
- Research indicates that occupational motor vehicle deaths are undercounted.

Opportunities and Challenges:

- Re-validate the data on work-related motor vehicle injury/fatality.
- Study the federal motor vehicle fleet to determine what works and what doesn't work.
- Implement only those interventions proven to work.
- Focus on 15-passenger vans, the largest fleet of which is owned by the federal government
- Identify and share best practices.

### **Summary of Key Recommendations/Opportunities/Challenges:**

- There is a legal imperative for employers to create safe workplaces, and the roadway is also a workplace.
- Organizations that address traffic safety may accrue a range of benefits: save lives and reduce injuries; protect their human and financial resources; lower operating costs; improve employee relations and morale; and enhance their corporate image.
- The public and occupational health sectors need to look beyond acute traffic crash injuries and focus similar attention on less-obvious cumulative work-related injuries, such as muscle and ligament, back strains, and joint injuries due to lifting and pulling, as well as cumulative stress on the kidneys and spine due to vibration and jarring.
- To better understand the problem of unintentional injury in occupational motor vehicle driving, we need cooperative research to inform researchers about industry operations and issues and research-to-practice initiatives to gain increased access to data and enhance the cooperative development of mutually acceptable solutions.
- To reduce work-related motor vehicle fatalities, there is a need to revalidate the data, identify and share best practices, and implement only those interventions that have been proven to work.